

Multi-academy trusts

Establishing a new academy trust or joining an existing trust

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What is a Multi-Academy Trust (MAT)?



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It is a single legal entity established to undertake a strategic approach to improve and maintain high educational standards across a number of schools

Not-for-profit charitable company, limited by guarantee

There is no 'lead' school (although one school might lead on the process to establish a MAT)

Employer of school staff and it is accountable for all of the schools in it, although each school can still have its own local governing body (LGB) which operates subject to an agreed delegation of powers

The composition of MATs varies in different locations. There are great examples of primary only or secondary only trusts, but also examples of trusts with different types and phases of schools. We expect that most trusts will be on a trajectory to either serve a minimum number of 7,500 pupils or run at least 10 schools

Benefits of MATs



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MATs create the conditions for deep collaboration and a shared strategic vision across multiple schools

Strategic governance is one of the key characteristics of academy trusts. By operating under a single governance structure, a strong board of academy trustees can effectively oversee the strategic direction of the academy trust and hold executive leaders to account for the outcomes of all pupils within it

Economies of scale - collective procurement/ administrative functions can be supported by a central team for finance, admin and HR allowing schools to focus on great teaching, curriculum and support for pupils

Can create more opportunities for **professional development** and **career progression** for staff, and often, better retention of key staff as a result

Smaller schools can access a wide range of specialist support that they could not afford to access on their own, for example, SLE/NLE expertise, specialist resources/equipment such as labs, arts facilities or outdoor spaces. Similarly, **Smaller schools can also enrich MATs** by having expertise in, for example, in curriculum delivery for mixed age classes, pastoral care etc

Richer and wider curriculum – including through the ability to recruit and deploy more specialist staff, such as subject specialists or faculty heads

Gives **teachers and leaders** the **opportunities** to gain experience across different school settings, share subject expertise and pilot innovative approaches to deliver the best outcomes based on the needs of each individual school

Planning stage*

Joining an existing trust



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WHICH TRUST?

The RSC's team can advise which academy trusts it might be worth contacting and may also indicate which academy trusts to avoid considering at this time. This may be because the academy trust already has multiple schools joining them or because they do not have the capacity to support your school

COMMUNICATE AND DISCUSS

As you weigh up potential academy trusts it can be helpful to communicate with the leaders of local academy trusts you are interested in to discuss how they might improve the quality of education in your school. You might also want to talk to other leaders of schools who have joined the academy trust

HUB MODEL?

A group of schools may also choose to join an academy trust together. If the schools are serving a new area – which might form a 'hub' of an existing academy trust – there are opportunities to design the group, including how the schools work together locally as well as under the direction of the academy trust board. For example, you may work with the academy trust to decide an appropriate regional governance structure, which will allow local schools within the hub to deliver services together

GOOD BALANCE OF SCHOOLS

The academy trust, the ESFA and the RSC's team will want to ensure a balance of schools who are strong (and able to support others) and those who would benefit from support, within each locality (or hub) of the academy trust. Each school's governing body should take its own decision and undertake its own due diligence engaging with their community, parents and governors

*Most dioceses have their own academy strategy and schools should consult its diocese. For Catholic schools, the school will be required to join a catholic academy trust

Planning stage

Establishing a new trust



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SHARED PLAN

If there is a clear need for a new academy trust in your area, you should begin by establishing a shared plan. This plan will ensure you have a unified approach to the other fundamental building blocks of your academy trust, such as **governance**, **finance**, and **leadership**. RSCs and the ESFA will review the plan for the academy trust when assessing an academy trust's sustainability, as part of their decision making

MEMBERSHIP

You will need to carefully consider the membership of your academy trust board, as they will be accountable and responsible for establishing the new academy trust, setting the strategic direction and appointing the chief executive officer (CEO). Before formally applying to an RSC for approval, you will need to have identified your members and most of your academy trustees. The RSC team can put you in touch with the Academy Ambassadors Programme who provides a free, bespoke service, matching business people and professionals to your trust

DUE DILIGENCE

Consider the relative strengths and areas of need in each of the schools in the academy trust, including teaching staff and curriculum models. It is also important to understand the financial, legal and capital position of the schools. You should carry out your due diligence as a group to assure the **feasibility of your new academy trust**. Once assured, you should submit an application to convert and establish the trust

IF APPROVED

Complete the memorandum and articles of association for your new academy trust and submit them to the RSC. Templates for this are held here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/academy-model-memorandum-andarticles-of-association>. Once confirmed with the department, you should register your new academy trust with Companies House. Then you are ready to appoint the allocated academy trustees and launch your academy trust

RSC decision



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Governance

Performance and
accountability

Strategic fit

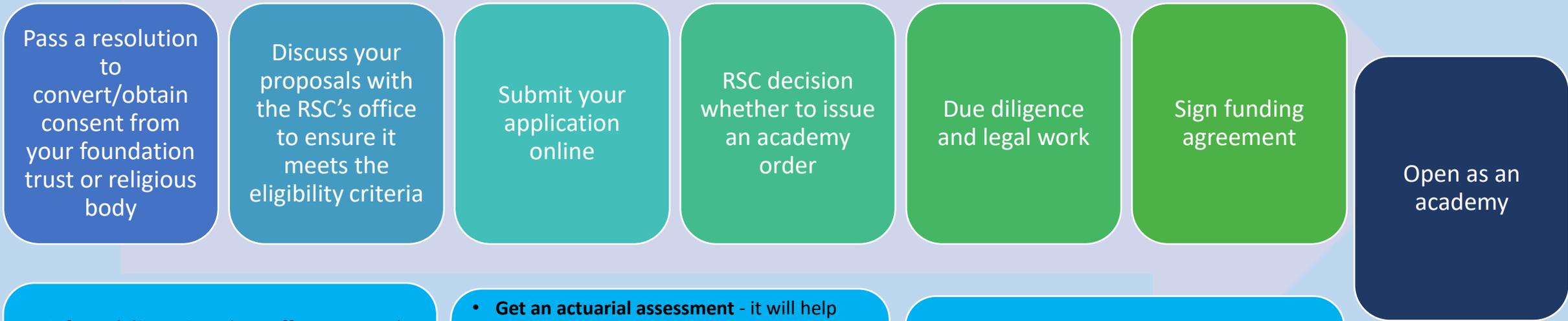
School and academy trust
improvement model

Finance

Applying to become an academy



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- **Informal discussion** - let staff, parents and pupils know that your governing body is considering applying to become an academy
- **Carry out desk based due diligence**

- **Get an actuarial assessment** - it will help you understand how much money your academy trust will have to spend on pension contributions for any staff members who are part of the LGPS
- **Land** - gather land registration documents – as they will be needed later

- **Appoint a solicitor**
- **Contracts** – compile a list
- **TUPE** - formal TUPE process cannot begin until we have approved your application to convert and granted your academy order

If you decide to become an academy you will need to run a statutory consultation. It can be carried out at any time but must be completed before the funding agreement is signed

How we can help your trust



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Advice and support

- We can provide early advice and feedback on the viability of your plans for your trust.
- We can also provide advice and support on how to strengthen and prepare for growth and explain what RSCs will be looking for in terms of leadership, governance, school improvement and financial sustainability.

Build links with those that can help

- We can put you in touch with other areas of the Department who can provide specialist advice and support e.g. ESFA, School Resource Management Advisors, Capital, Etc.
- We can help you establish links with other trusts who may be able to help you achieve your ambitions, whether you are looking for a more established trust who would be willing offer mentoring, coaching and other forms of support.
- We also have strong links with external partners and stakeholders, including curriculum hubs, school improvement providers and organisations that can help you review and strengthen the governance of your trust and recruit new members to your board.

Signpost you to sources of support and guidance

- We can signpost you to key guidance and tools you can use to strengthen your trust e.g. MAT school improvement capacity framework, competency framework for governance, guidance on applying to become a sponsor.

Provide access to DfE programmes and events

- RDD deliver a range of DfE programmes across the North. We deliver a regular programme of development and networking events, both nationally and regionally.

Additional information and support



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[Governance handbook and competency framework](#): Guidance on the roles and duties of governing boards, and advice on the skills, knowledge and behaviours they need to be effective.

[Academy trusts: governance](#): A collection of guidance and resources for academy trust governors

[Regional Schools Commissioners' decision making framework](#)

[Regional Schools Commissioners \(RSCs\) decision making 2021](#): A document setting out how RSCs will make decisions in the absence of any data from 2020 tests, assessments and exams

[Schools Causing Concern guidance](#): RSCs' responsibilities and powers for addressing underperformance in maintained schools and academies

[Sponsor an academy guidance](#): How to apply to become a sponsor

[Multi-academy trusts: good practice guidance and expectations for growth](#): Sets out more details on what RSCs will look for when approving new academy trusts and the growth of existing trusts

[Opening a free school or maths school](#)

[Academies: making significant changes or closure by agreement](#)

[Multi-academy trust \(MAT\): resources](#): A range of resources on establishing and developing your trust, covering trust development, people and leadership, school improvement, governance, growth and development and finance

[Guidance on running a school or college](#): A comprehensive set of guidance on running a school or college

[Academy Trust Handbook](#)

[Advisory Boards](#): Terms of reference, meeting schedules, agenda, minutes and HTB meeting templates